

Legislative Profile

By *Elishia Ballentine*, Editor

In Memory of Representative Jack Venable

**Democrat, District 76
(Elmore County)**



The citizens of Alabama and the state government lost one of its most respected and influential legislators when Jack Venable passed away on November 18, 2005, after a lengthy battle with leukemia. Alabama's forestry community, as well, lost a true friend.

During his tenure in the Legislature, Rep. Jack Venable was a strong supporter of the Alabama Forestry Commission (AFC) and the state's volunteer fire departments. One of his last legislative efforts involved a proposal to simplify the way distinctive vehicle tags are issued to firefighters. He drafted legislation to require the AFC and the Alabama Fire College to prepare a list of certified fire departments, rather than a list of individual firefighters, for distribution to counties. Under the bill, each fire chief will complete a form authorizing individual firefighters to purchase their tags. Venable believed that this legislation would make the process of issuing firefighter tags more efficient, and would save state and county governments time and money. Following Venable's death, his bill was handled by Rep. Allen Layson and Sen. Ted Little. It passed the Legislature and was signed by the governor five months to the day after his death.

A native of Elmore County, he graduated from Wetumpka High School in 1956 and received his BS in Business Administration from Auburn University

in 1961. Between 1956 and 1969, he served a total of 13 years in the Army Reserve and the Alabama National Guard.

As a journalist, he worked at various radio and television stations before landing as News Director with WSFA-TV in Montgomery. He later joined the staff of Congressman Bill Nichols in Washington D.C. (3rd District of Alabama), serving as his Administrative Assistant from 1967 to 1970.

After he and his wife, Jo, bought the *Tallahassee Tribune* in 1970, Venable had been editor and co-publisher. He was past president of the Alabama Press Association and a member of the Professional Journalism Society. He was a long-time member of the Chancel Choir at the First United Methodist Church in Tallahassee, and was active in the Tallahassee Rotary Club. One of his great loves was Auburn football, and he served on the Auburn University Board of Trustees from 1989 until 2003.

Venable was elected to the House of Representatives in 1974 and served continuously for 31 years. During his long tenure in the legislature he chaired several committees including the Committee on Constitutional Revision, the Standing Committee on Constitution and Elections, and the Rules Committee. He was nominated by House colleagues as one of the 15 outstanding members each year from 1983 until 1991, the only legislator to have been nominated

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each year the award was presented. He was voted Outstanding House Member among 15 nominees in 1985. Rep. Venable was one of ten legislators to receive the Montgomery Advertiser-Journal's "Meritorious Public Service Award" in 1989, 1991, 1993, and 1995. The 2002 "Legislative Conservationist of the Year," he also received the "CLAS Legislative Leadership Award" in 2004.

Rep. Venable is survived by his wife, Jo, and two children Cameron and Ben. ☙

Editor's Note: Jack Venable was not only a personal friend, but a mentor. The author is honored to note that he taught her most everything she knows about journalism.